From flight line to front line

USARCENT, medical battalion move, fix critical supplies

Staff Sgt. Alex Licea Third Army/U.S. Army Central Public Affairs Office

Numbers are a big part in the day-to-day operations for Soldiers who handle medical supplies and equipment maintenance in Iraq.

377th Theater The Support Command and Third Army/U.S. Army Central (USARCENT), the Army component for the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), working at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, are responsible for the logistics support for military assets entering Iraq, Afghanistan and in areas across the Middle East and Central Asia.

Maj. David Hammer, medical logistics officer for Third Army/USARCENT, sets the policy for medical logistics entering the CENTCOM theater. Hammer said most of the supplies travel to Company A, 32nd Multifunctional Medical Battalion (32nd MMB) from Fort Bragg, Spc. Shawn Johnson, a medical lab techni- for 70 percent of the N.C.

As a support operations Battalion (32nd MMB) scans a unit of blood ical supplies into officer for the 32nd MMB, before handing it to Staff Sgt. Patrick Kaer, Iraq, Afghanistan Maj. Christopher David platoon sergeant of the medical lab team. and the Horn of analyzes more than \$10 The battalion currently stocks up to 1,000 Africa daily. million worth of medical units of blood at any given time and can Most of these supequipment and supplies pack, ship, track and deliver the critical plies are housed at being shipped and distrib- units of blood to hospitals around Iraq in and flown in from uted into Iraq, and tracks less than four hours and as fast as two. more than 615,000 pounds

of cargo per month supporting more than 450 units. There is the added pressure of coordinating and tracking dozens of ground and air movements leaving each day to six forward distribution teams that dispense medical supplies. But, there is only one number David looks at.

"The only figure I care about is decreasing the waiting time of units receiving their medical supplies," said David, a father of two. "Although we have a good turnaround time from request to delivery of the product, there is always room for improvement. That's what's important ... getting the right product to the right unit in the fastest time."

The 32nd MMB serves a major supply and distribution center in Iraq. Its distribution teams, located in separate medical shipment hubs, stock

> everything bandages to blood.

"We receive up to customer requests a day," said Spc. Mathavy Yasa, a logistic specialist, who works for the control and request center of 32nd MMB. "We ensure that we are not only tracking the items but that they get to their final destination. The follow-up is kev!"

The unit is also responsible for the medical equipment maintenance in Iraq and shipping blood to patients in need within hours of an emergency.

Army and Air Force assets based in Kuwait, Qatara Photo by Staff Sgt. Alex Licea and Germay account cian with the 32nd Multifunctional Medical movement of med-

> the United States Material Medical

Center-Southwest Management Asia (USAMMC-SWA), also under USARCENT's control. The medical distribution center is 65,000 square feet – bigger than a football field. "The center stocks more than 2,700 lines of

medical supplies," said Lt. Col. Jonathan Branch, commander of the USAMMC-SWA. "We have the ability to stock and supply the major hospitals in Iraq and Afghanistan with what

USAMMC-SWA is operated by more than 80 Soldiers who work three eight-hour shifts, seven days a week.

Branch said the workflow is essential because

combat support hospitals and medical units across Iraq and Afghanistan request supplies all

After the cargo is packed and placed on pallets, it's taken by air to its destinations.

"Medical logistics is not perfect, but we are all a team and make it work," said David. "All of our efforts are interrelated. The USAMMC-SWA in Qatar, the USAMMC-Europe in Germany and the 32nd MMB collaborate supply units as quickly as possible."

"On average," Hammer said, "USARCENT transports 450,000 pounds of medical supplies each month across the theater. That equals 15,000 pounds a day."

When supplies are moved, military and civilian personnel hold the cargo in 35,000-square-foot warehouses before distribution by air to troop clinics. Ground transportation is used one-third of the time. With the consistent threat of improvised explosive devices, ground movement is being reduced.

"We are trying very hard to maximize air assets to get us off the roads," said David. "However, sometimes the only way we can receive anything is by convoy."

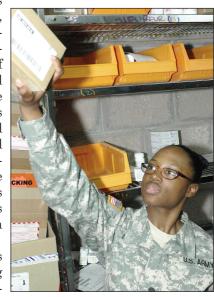
Despite the seriousness of their work and having 10 months at home between combat tours, the 32nd MMB may be a cohesive group of Soldiers with the wittiest personalities.

"We have a great bunch of Soldiers here," said

Sgt. 1st Class Corey Lord, noncommissioned officerin-charge of the medical maintenance section, Soldiers joked and laughed in the background. "I've been with this unit five years and it's been a great time."

"For us, it's about making sure the custimes," added David.

"The efforts save every day."



tomers have Spc. Jasmine Bryant, coneverything trolled substance specialist, they need at 32nd MMB, inventories and stockpiles controlled substances in a locked vault. The College Park native is lives responsible for shipping and accountability.